

Remarks

Claims 1-4 and 6-22 are pending for the Examiner's consideration, including new claim 22. No new matter is believed to have been added by the amendments presented herein to the specification and claims.

In the Office Action, the specification was objected to because of the amendment to the paragraph on page 6, lines 18-24 which was presented in the previous Amendment filed on July 25, 2005 -- "a graded increase of the available flow cross sections." In response, upon further review, this earlier amendment was made in error and the specification has been amended to again recite --a graded reduction-- as presented in the originally filed application. Thus, the objection to the introduction of "new matter" respectfully is overcome.

Claims 1-21 also were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first and second paragraphs for the reasons stated in the Office Action. Claim 5, however, had been canceled.

Table 1 of the application shows that the graded reduction in flow cross section is not progressive but is degressive (i.e., becomes smaller with higher stage number and vanishes at stage 5 with a ratio of 1). In other words, the *reduction* is greatest at the first stage and least at the fifth stage.

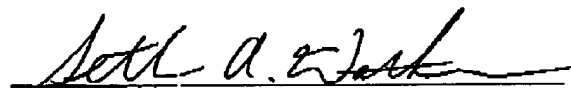
Applicants appreciate the Examiner's "closer inspection" of the data contained in Table 1.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all the pending claims are in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. If the Examiner does not agree, then a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues so as to expedite the eventual allowance of the claims.

A Request for Continued Examination (RCE), a Petition for Extension of Time, and a Fee Transmittal Sheet are submitted concurrently herewith. Should any additional fees be required, please charge such fees to Steptoe & Johnson LLP Deposit Account No. 19-4293.

Date: February 28, 2006

Respectfully Submitted,


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Enclosures